The Demon King's Pouch

Monkey Series 20

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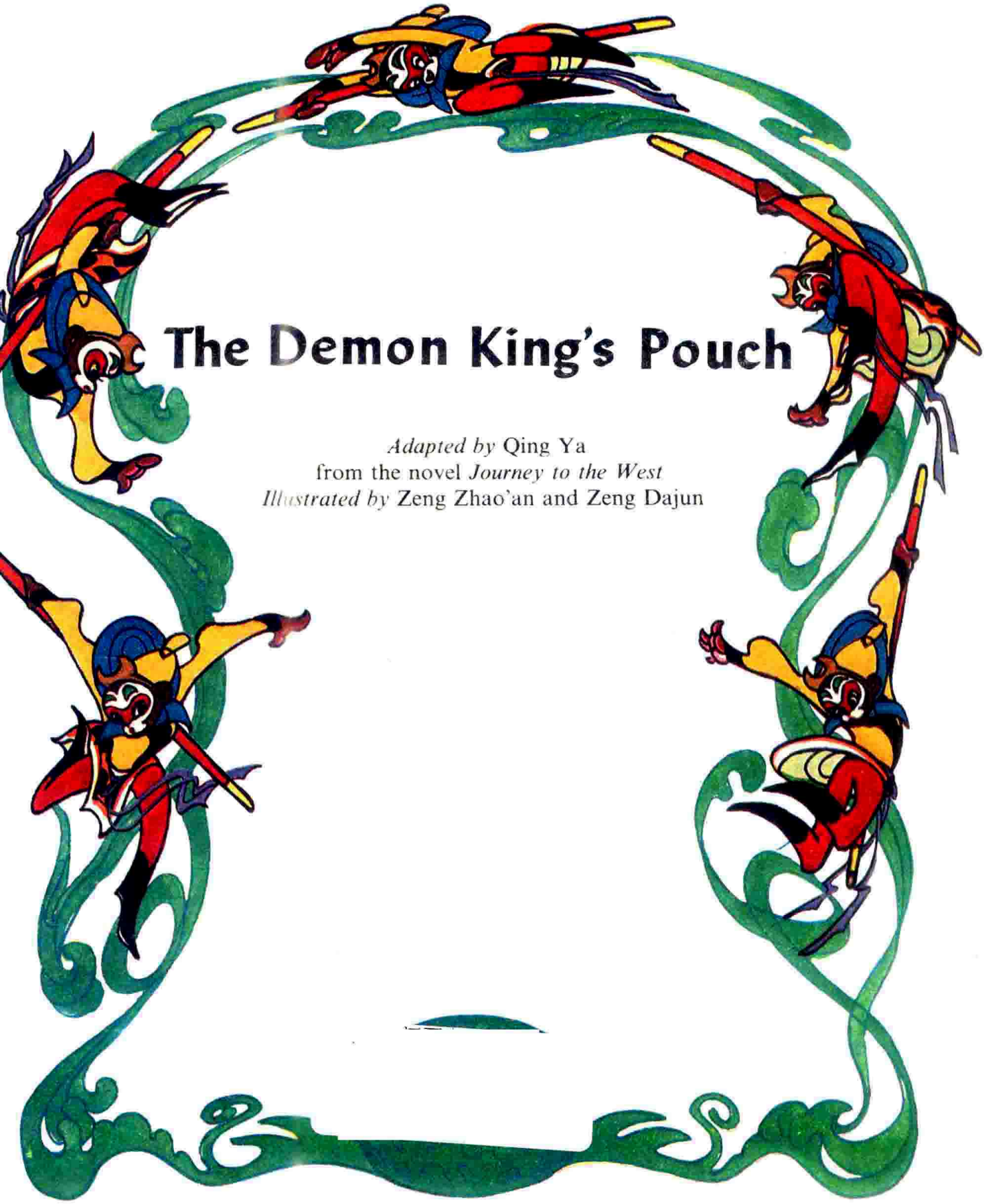

The Demon King's Pouch

Adapted by Qing Ya
from the novel *Journey to the West*
Illustrated by Zeng Zhao'an and Zeng Dajun

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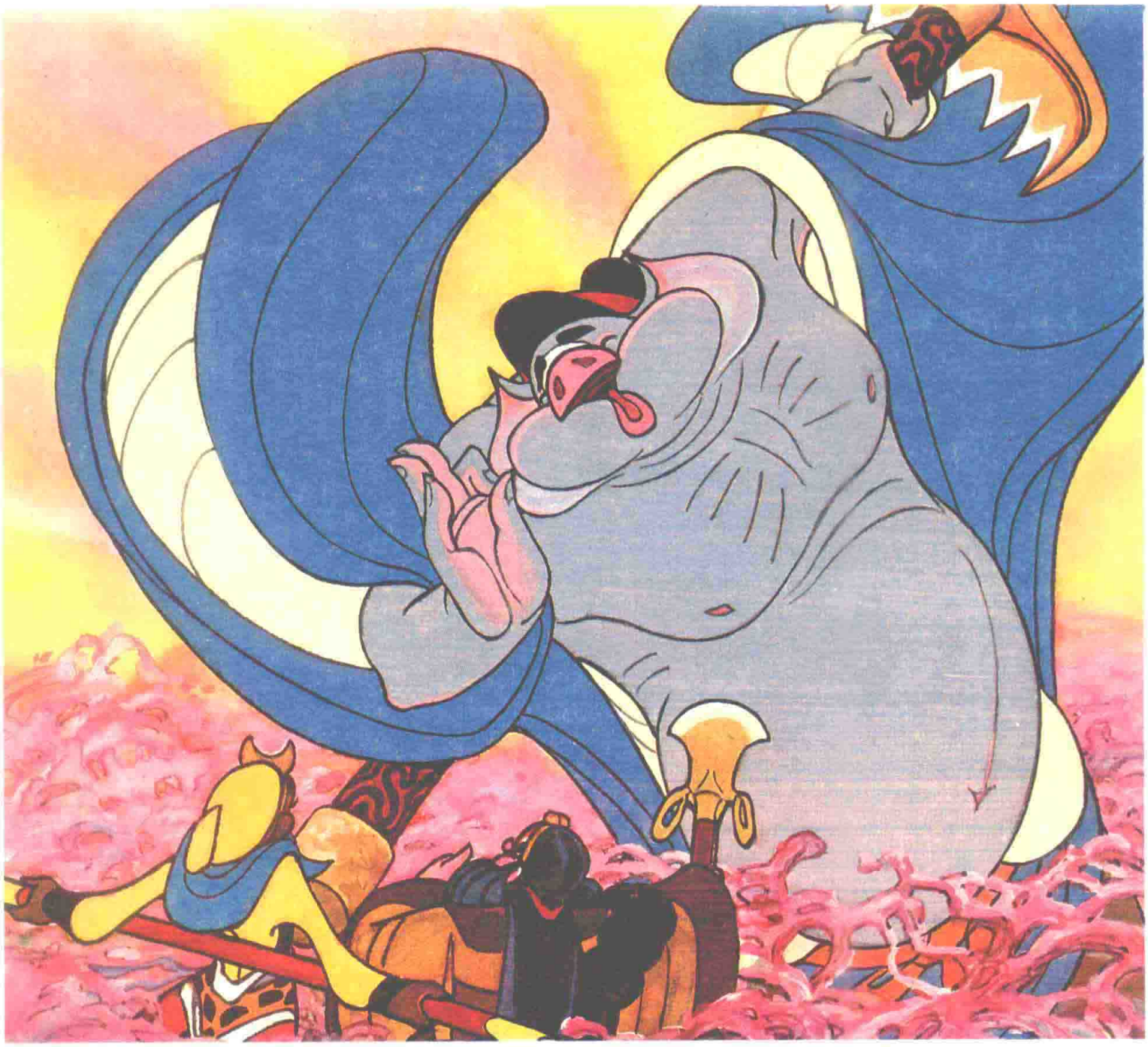
After they overpowered the Nine-Headed Monster, the Tang Priest and his disciples continued on their way to the West, but one day the four pilgrims found their path blocked by a high mountain. Monkey at once leapt into the air and looked into the distance. "Master," he said, "that mountain is covered with all sorts of bushes. It is very vast and seems to stretch for more than three hundred miles."



When he heard this, the Tang Priest asked in alarm, "What shall we do, then?" "What's so difficult?" said Pig with a smile. "If you want to climb over this mountain, just depend on me." Then they found Pig was saying a spell. "Grow!" Pig shouted and turned himself into a giant a hundred feet tall.

Brandishing his rake, Pig shouted, "Change!" and it grew as long as a hundred feet. Then he strode forward, rake in hand, and cut his way through the bushes. "Follow me, Master!" he shouted. The Tang Priest was delighted and followed Pig upwards with the help of Monkey and Friar Sand.

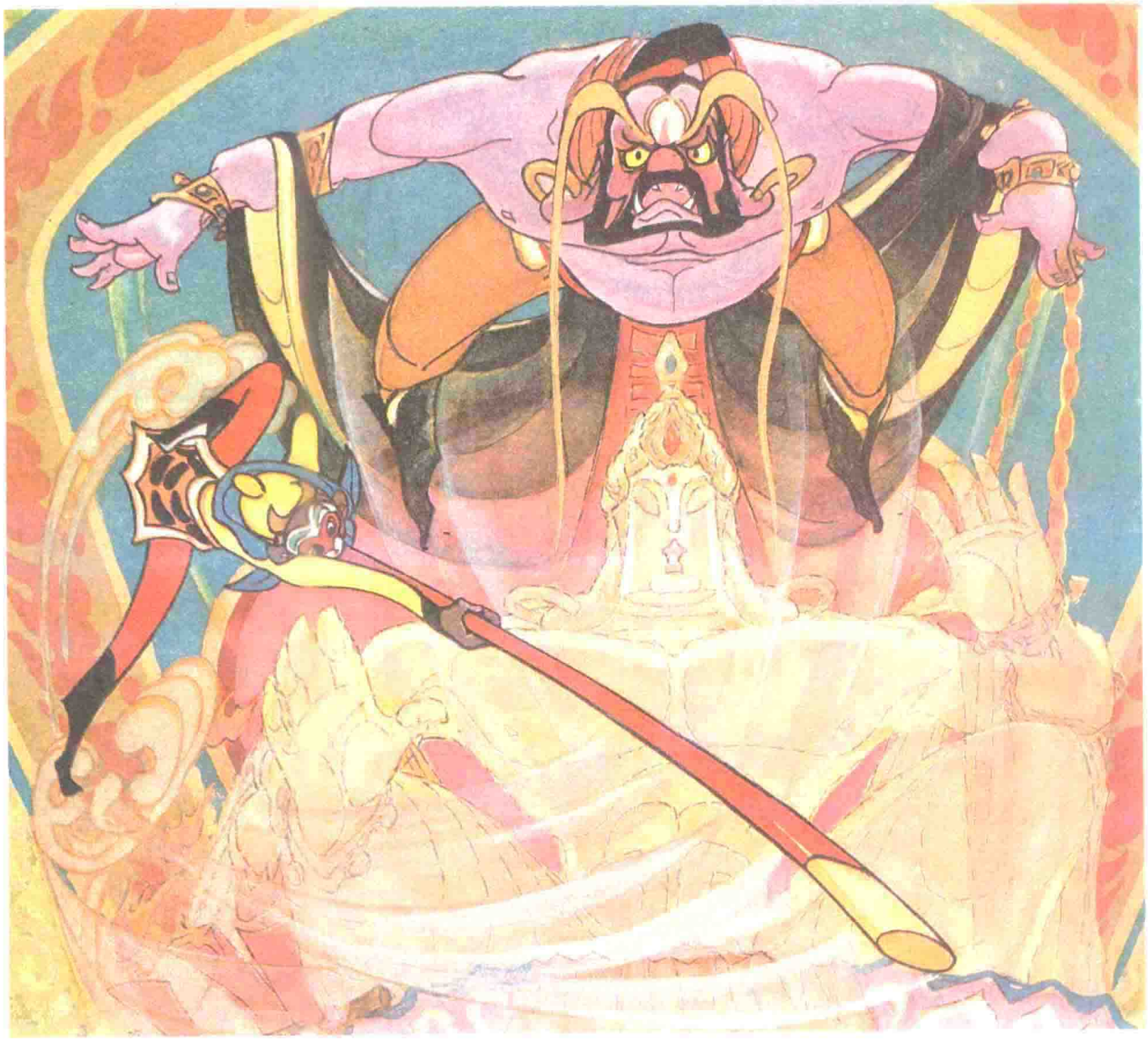
Before long, they saw a stretch of flat land in front of them. Out of a rosy mist emerged an imposing building and the sound of bells. "What place is that, disciples?" asked the Tang Priest.

After he had taken a good look, Monkey reported, "It's a monastery, Master, but for some reason I feel there's something evil about it."

As he drew near the monastery, the Tang Priest saw the words Lesser Thunder Monastery above its gate. He was about to go in when Monkey said, "No, we mustn't go in. This place looks thoroughly sinister." "It's a monastery, and there must be a Buddha statue in it," answered the Tang Priest. "I am under a vow to worship every Buddha statue I see." He then straightened his clothes and strode forward.

As they entered the hall, they saw four big warrior attendants of the Buddha, eight big bodhisattvas and five hundred arhats. The Tang Priest, Pig and Friar Sand were all so overwhelmed that they kowtowed at every step until they reached the Buddha statue. Monkey alone did not bow.

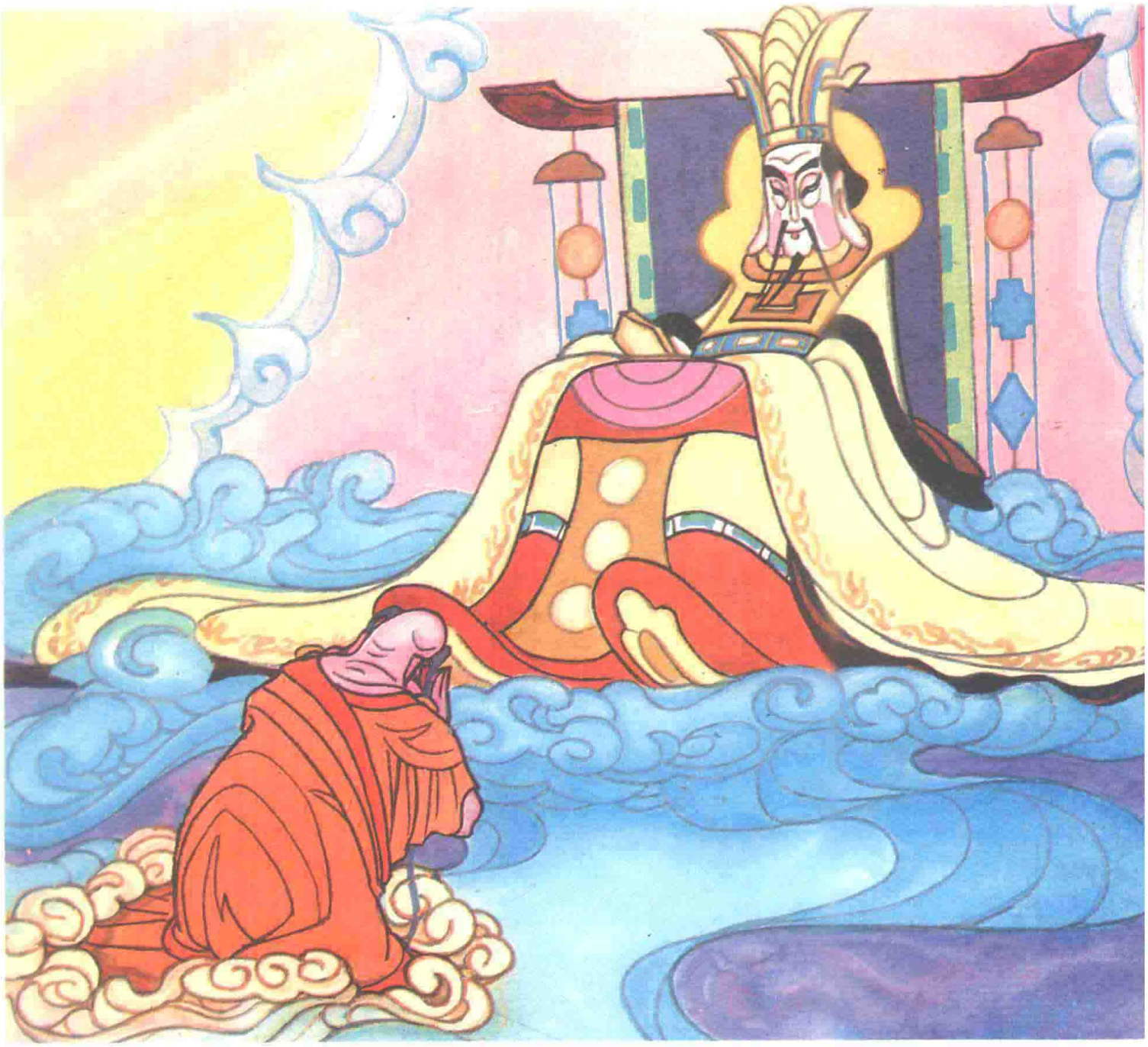
"Monkey," came a shrill voice from the lotus throne, "why don't you kowtow when you see the Buddha?" As Monkey took a careful look around he discovered that everything was false. "Evil beast!" he shouted. "How dare you pretend to be the Buddha! Stay where you are!"



Monkey raised his cudgel to strike. It turned out that the Buddha on the lotus throne was a demon king, and all the arhats and bodhisattvas were his little devils. They now turned back into the evil creatures they really were. The demon king, sprang at Monkey while his little devils swarmed forward to capture the Tang Priest and the other two disciples.

Just at this moment a pair of gold cymbals came out of the sky to strike together with a mighty clash. Monkey tried desperately to hold the cymbals apart, but in vain. He was enclosed completely from head to foot.

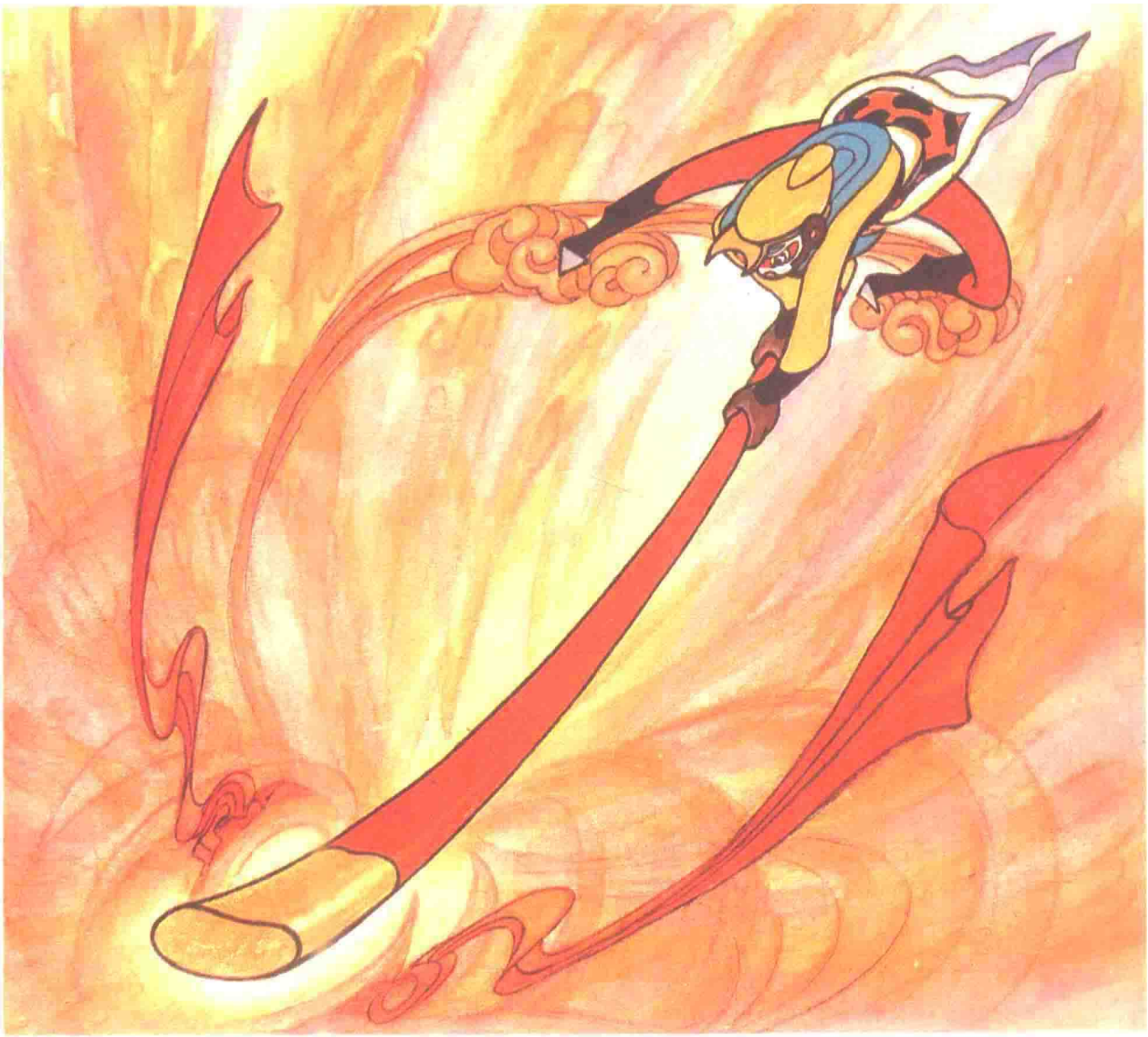
Inside the cymbals Monkey could find no way out. In desperation he recited a spell to summon the Protector, the Six Dings and the Six Jias and said to them, "You had better go to the heavenly court at once and ask the Jade Emperor to send his heavenly army to rescue me."



So the Protector told the Six Dings and Six Jias to look after the Tang Priest without revealing themselves. He then set off on a cloud, heading for the Hall of Miraculous Mist. On arrival, he kowtowed before the Jade Emperor and reported, "The Great Sage Equalling Heaven is now caught inside a pair of cymbals by a demon king and can't get out. I have come to ask for help." Hearing this, the Jade Emperor immediately ordered the Twenty-eight Constellations to defeat the demons.

The constellations followed the Protector to the cymbals. They wanted to smash the cymbals open but were afraid the noise would wake the devils. Just at this moment one of the constellations, called Metal Dragon, hit on an idea. "Great Sage, I'll wedge my horn between the cymbals and you can turn yourself into something tiny and get out where I've loosened them." So saying, he made his horn small, pushed it hard where the cymbals joined together and managed to get it inside.

The Metal Dragon enlarged his horn, but the cymbals kept a close bite on it and not a crack appeared anywhere around. "It's no use," said Monkey. "You'll have to bear the pain and pull me out." The Great Sage then bored a small hole in the tip of horn, made himself small, crawled into the hole and shouted, "Pull it out!"



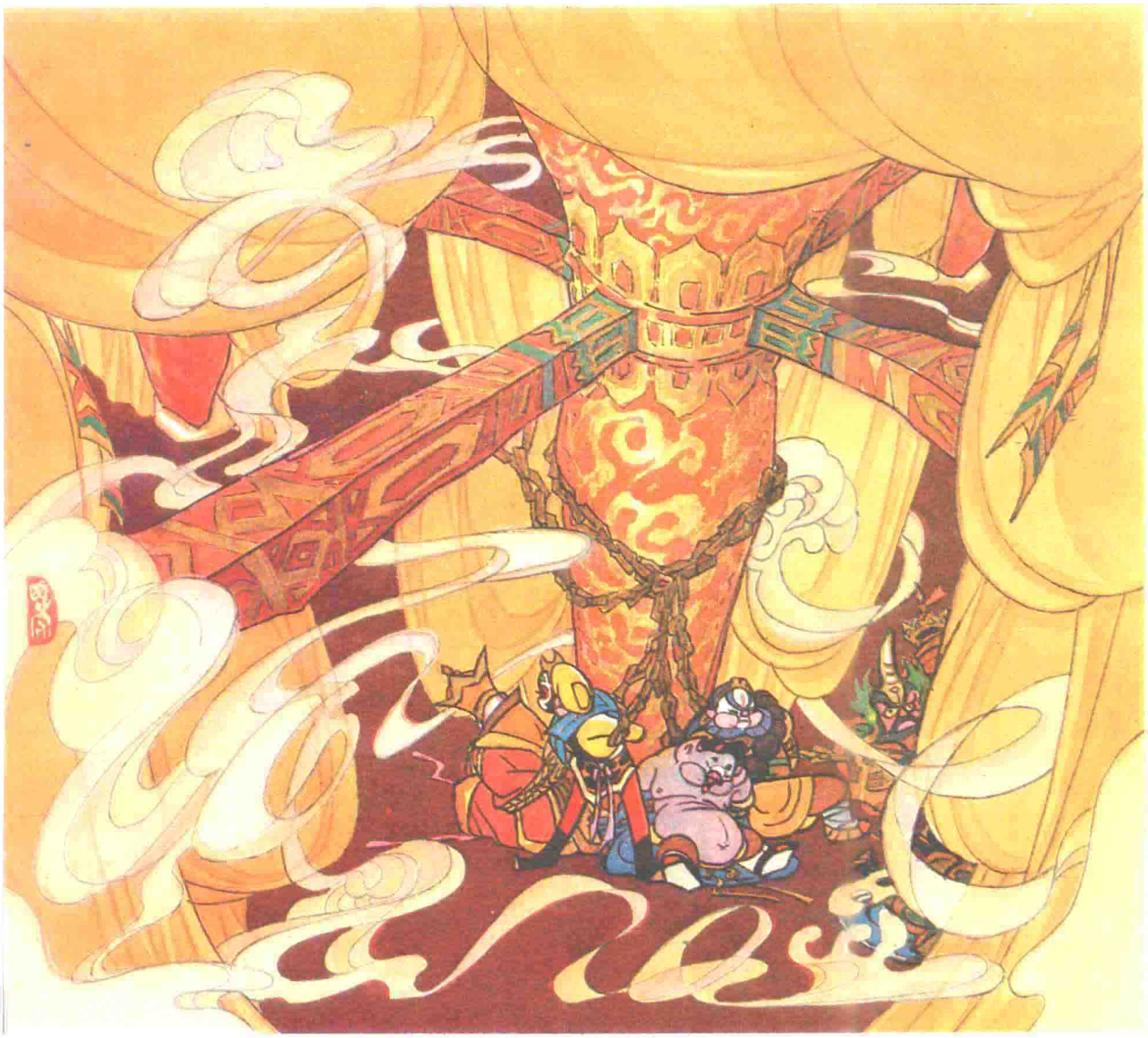
The constellation pulled out his horn with great effort. Monkey then crawled out of the hole in the horn, resumed his own size, raised his cudgel and smashed the cymbals apart with a tremendous noise like a copper mountain collapsing.

The demon king, shocked out of his sleep, hastily ordered all the demons to chase Monkey with their weapons. Seeing the demon king approaching, Monkey brought down his cloud and shouted, "What kind of monster do you think you are? What evils are you doing here?"

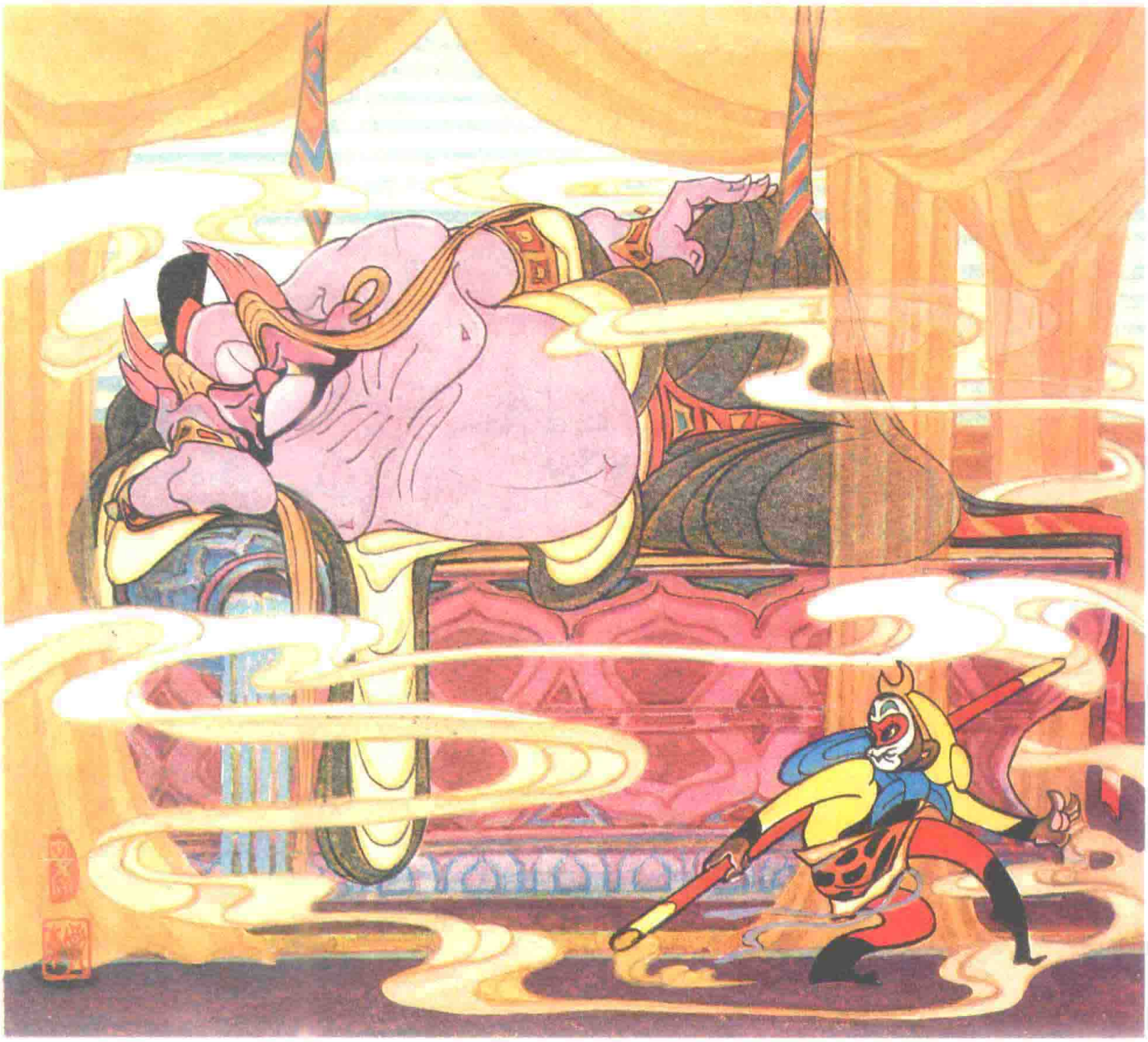
The demon king said, "This is the Lesser Western Heaven and I am called the Yellow-Browed Buddha. I have heard of your journey to the West and have lured your master in so that you and I could have a trial of strength." "Evil spirit, if you want a trial of strength, try this from my cudgel," said Monkey with a laugh.

The demon king brandished his wolf's-tooth cudgel and struck at Monkey with it. Monkey warded it off with his cudgel and the two of them were locked in a fight. They fought fifty rounds without either emerging as victor. Just at this moment the constellations, who were all armed, uttered a shout and surrounded the demon king.

The demon king was not at all afraid. He held his cudgel with one hand and with the other undid an old cotton pouch that was around his waist as a sash. This he threw into the air. With a loud swish it caught Monkey and all the constellations.



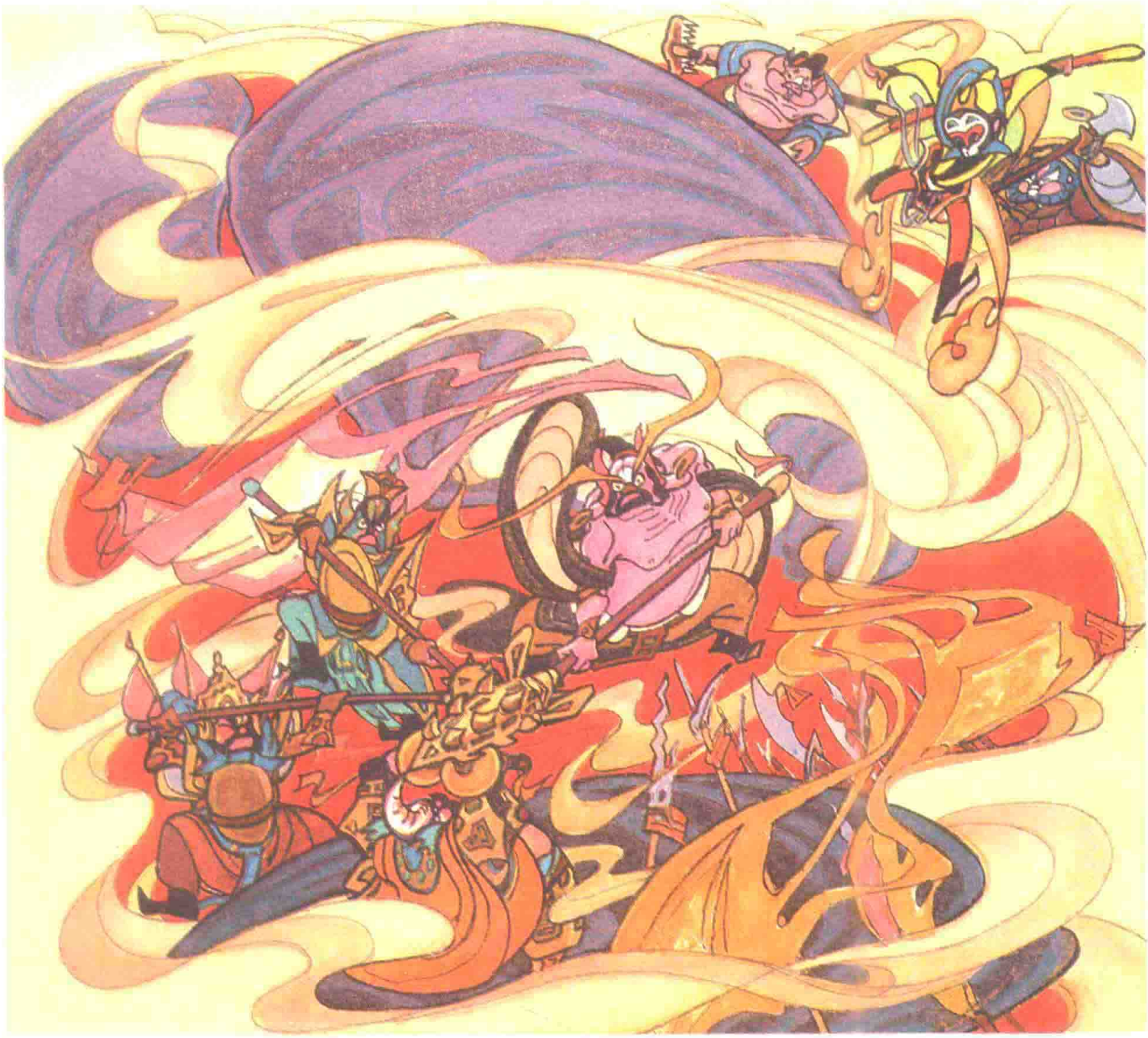
After taking the pouch back inside the hall, the demon king fetched some ropes, opened the bag and took his prisoners out one at a time to be tied up. He then had Monkey carried to the back to be locked up together with the Tang Priest.



Staying tied up until the middle of the night, Monkey used escape magic to make himself so small that he slipped out of his ropes. Then he untied the Tang Priest and all the constellations and told them to leave the place quietly. Monkey himself went back to the hall to look for the baggage while the demon king was still sound asleep.

Monkey found his way through doors and over walls, but he accidentally made a noise and woke the demon king. Jumping out of bed, the demon king yelled, "Intruders! Intruders!" As soon as he heard this, Monkey somersaulted out of the hall and fled before they could catch him.

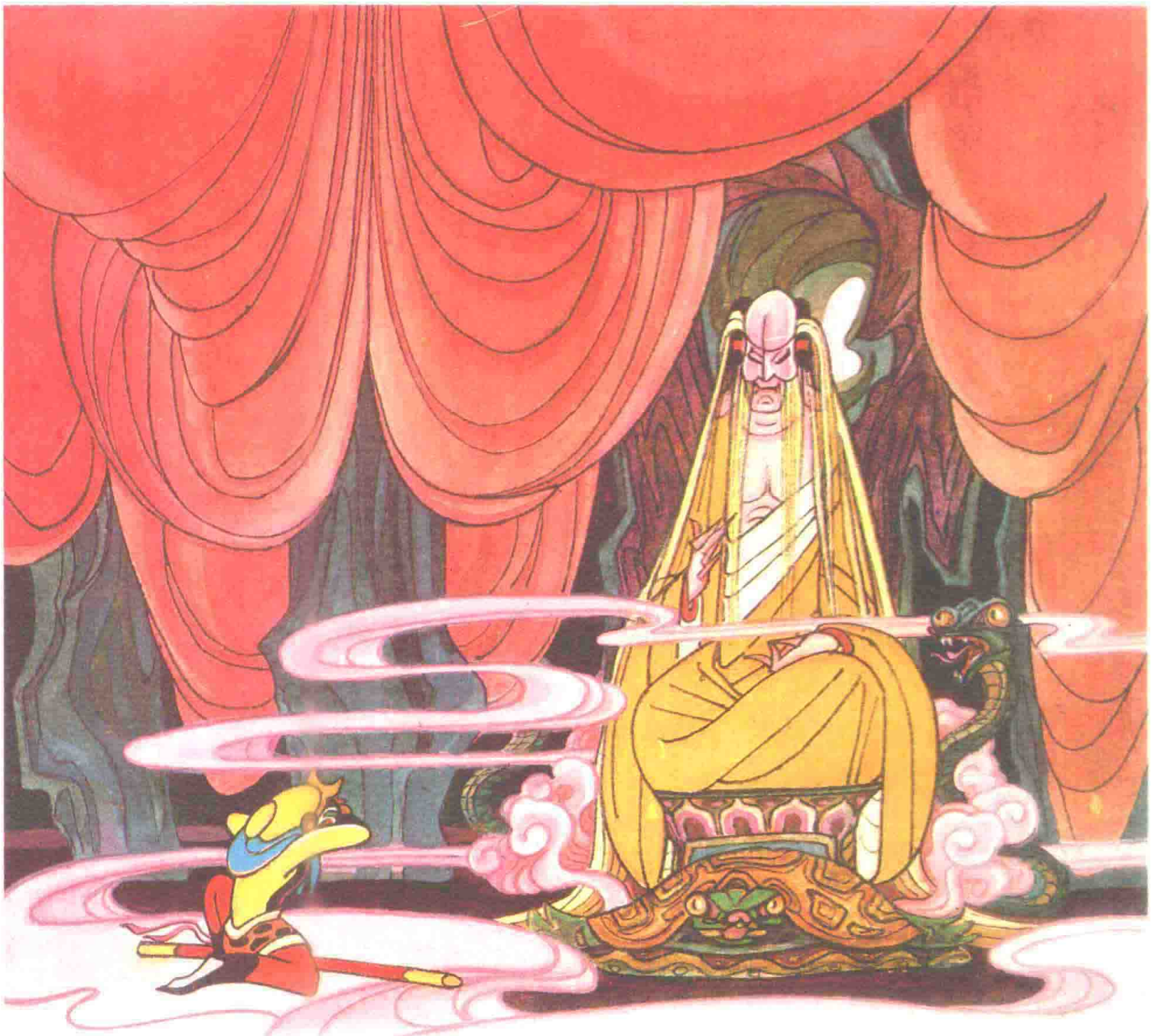
No matter how hard he looked, the demon king could not find the Tang Priest and the others, so he seized his cudgel and led his troops out of the monastery in hot pursuit.



At the sight of the approaching evil spirits, Pig, Friar Sand and all the constellations rushed forward to meet their enemy. Monkey also somersaulted in and joined them in attacking the demon king.

Seeing it was getting late, the demon king again undid his pouch and threw it open. Monkey, catching sight of him, shouted, "This is bad! Let's get out of here!" With that, he somersaulted straight up to the ninth heaven, but the Tang Priest and the constellations were caught in the bag again.

Up in the clouds, Monkey wondered to himself: "What sort of treasure is this pouch? It's so powerful!" Then he suddenly remembered the Heavenly Honoured Demon Suppressor, who was infinitely resourceful. Probably he would have a way to rescue the master.



At this thought Monkey somersaulted by auspicious cloud straight to the Hall of Peace. There he told the Heavenly Honoured Demon Suppressor about how the demon king of Lesser Thunder Monastery had captured his master and the other gods. The Heavenly Honoured Demon Suppressor immediately summoned General Tortoise, General Snake and the four magic dragons and ordered them to help Monkey subdue the evil spirits.

Monkey bowed in thanks and went with Tortoise, Snake and the magic dragons on an auspicious cloud to Lesser Western Heaven. Before long they were over Lesser Thunder Monastery, where Monkey brought down his cloud and challenged the demon king to battle.

On hearing the challenge, the demon king put on his armour and went through the monastery gate, shouting, "Which dragon gods are you? How dare you come here to challenge me?" Generals Tortoise and Snake shouted back, "We are generals of the Heavenly Honoured Demon Suppressor. We are here to arrest you. Hand over the Tang Priest, the constellations and all the others and your life will be spared."

When the demon king heard this, he retorted furiously, "How dare you talk like that? What sort of powers do you think you have? Take this!" The four dragons turned their clouds over to make rain while the two generals charged forward with their weapons. They surrounded the demon king and engaged him in a ferocious fight.

After fighting for an hour, the demon king was unable to hold out any longer. Suddenly he threw open his pouch and captured Generals Tortoise and Snake and the dragon gods, who were caught off guard. Monkey alone spotted his trick in advance and managed to escape with a somersault.

Monkey landed his cloud and lay sprawled on a rock, listless and dispirited. "That demon's pouch is such a terror that it will be very hard for me to rescue Master. What shall I do?" he said to himself. Just then he heard a call: "Great Sage, don't go to sleep. Go to rescue your master as soon as you can."

Monkey opened his eyes and sat up to see that it was the Duty God of the Day. "Don't worry, Great Sage," the god comforted him. "There's a Bodhisattva King Teacher who has enormous magic powers. If you can get his help, I am sure you can subdue the demon king."

Monkey was delighted to hear this. He somersaulted off and soon found himself outside the monastery gate of Bodhisattva King Teacher. Looking around, he saw a pagoda towering over majestic halls and colourful walkways. Clothed in an auspicious atmosphere, it was indeed a holy place for Buddhists.

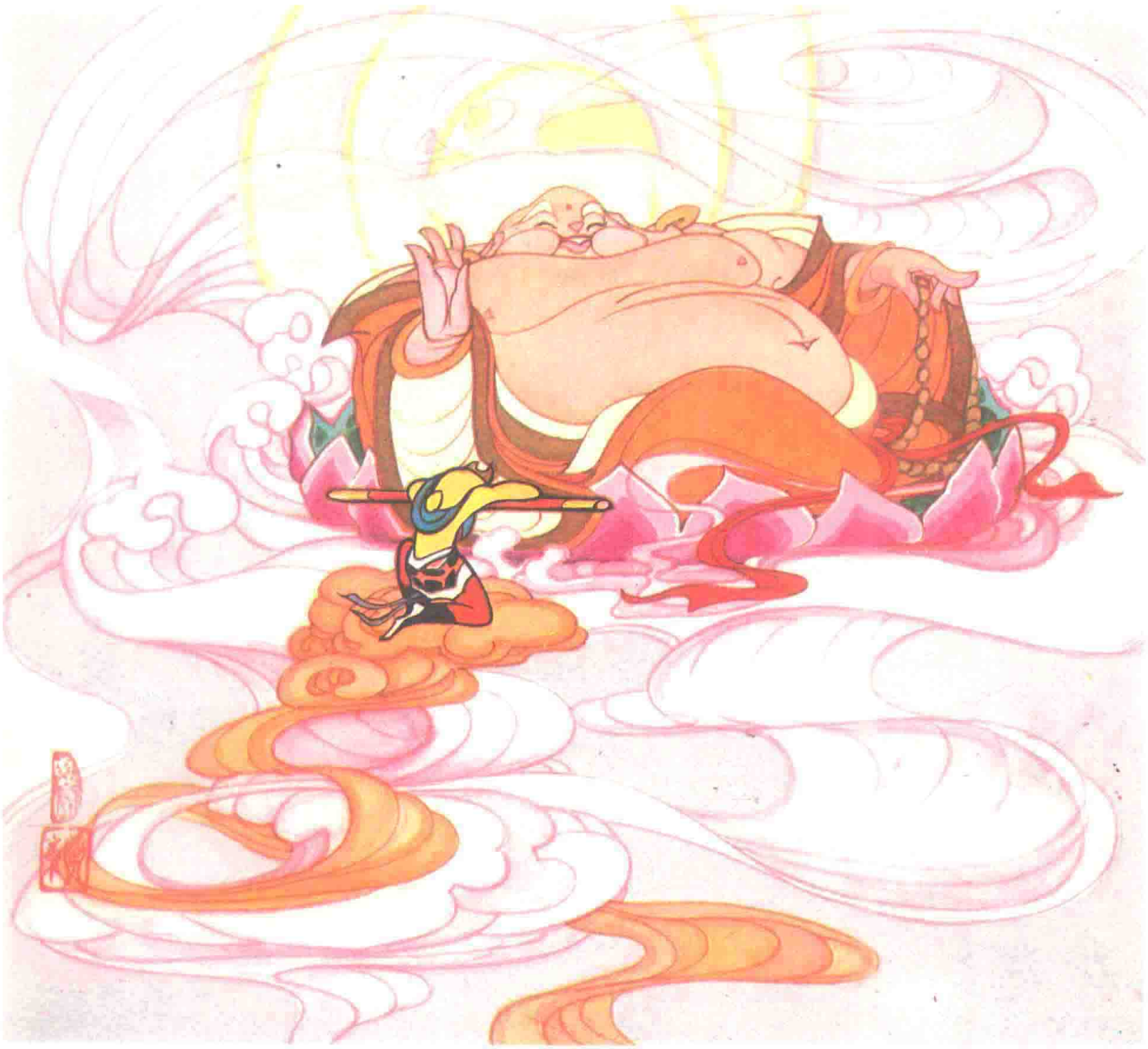
Monkey looked around as he walked towards the main hall. The Bodhisattva King Teacher, who was expecting him, came out to meet him with his lesser gods.

Entering the hall, Monkey explained what he had come for. "I am obliged to help you since you have come in person," said the King Teacher. "I'll send my disciple, Little Prince Zhang, and four heavenly generals to help you. I am sure they can overwhelm the demon."

On the orders of the King Teacher, Little Prince Zhang and the four heavenly generals followed Monkey to Lesser Thunder Monastery. As soon as they got there, they shouted their challenge: "Listen, you evil spirit. We are the disciples of the Bodhisattva King Teacher and we are here on his orders to arrest you. You'd better surrender yourself."

On hearing the challenge, the demon king came out of his monastery and threw himself into fighting the heavenly generals. After fighting for a long time, the demon king was beginning to lose strength. As he secretly undid his pouch, Monkey shouted in haste, "Look out, gentlemen!" But before they could understand what he meant, the prince and the four generals were put into the bag.

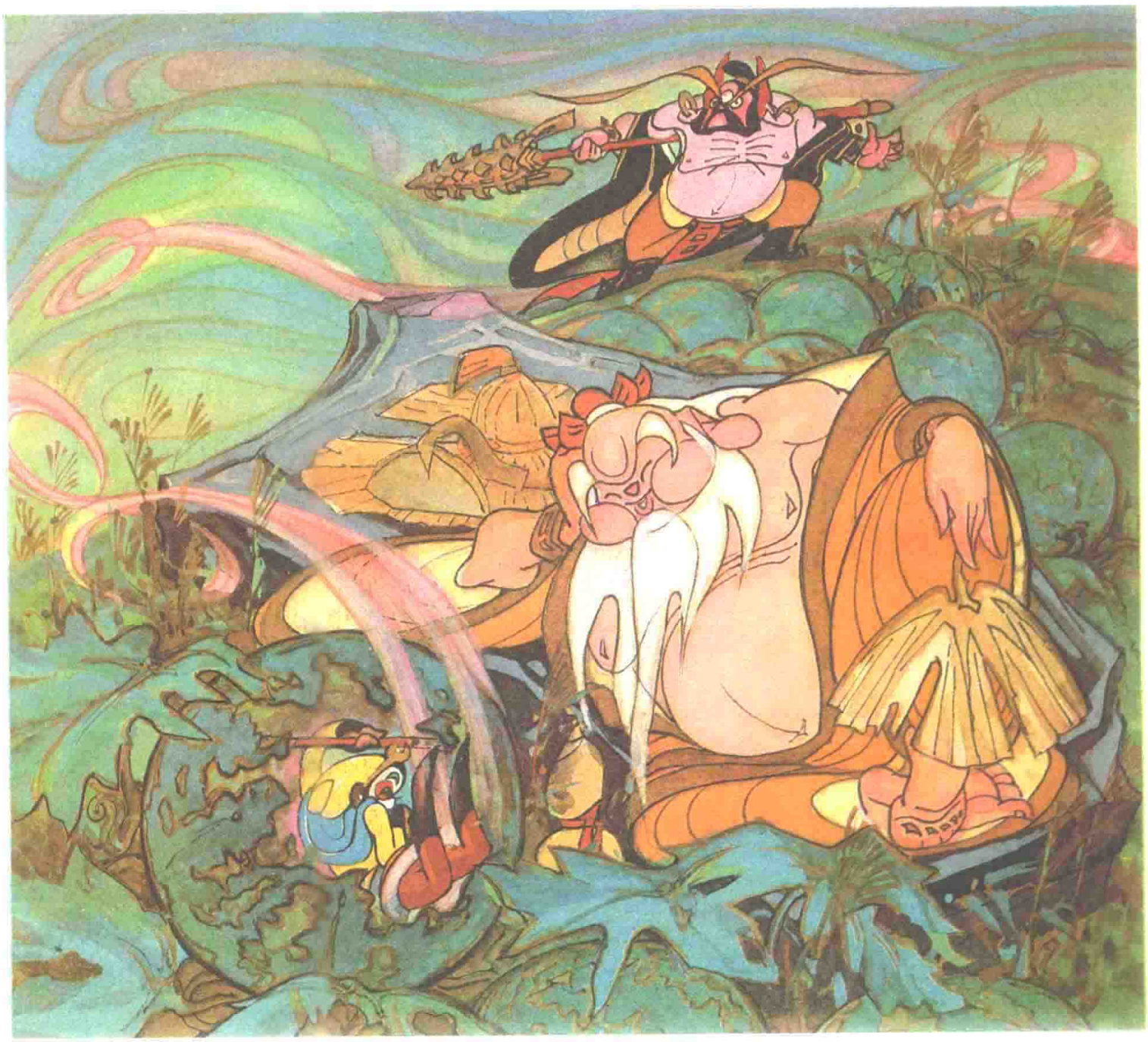
Unable to subdue the demon king, Monkey was feeling anxious when a multicoloured cloud suddenly landed to the southeast. On it stood the Laughing Monk. Monkey asked, "Where are you going, Lord of the East?" "I'm here because of the demon in Lesser Thunder Monastery," replied the monk.



The Laughing Monk said to Monkey, "That demon king was a yellow-browed page who used to strike my chime bronze. He stole some of my treasures while I was away and is doing evil here. That pouch is my 'heaven and earth' bag. The wolf's-tooth cudgel was originally the stick for striking the chime."

Monkey said, "That evil spirit has very great magic powers. How can you possibly subdue him?" "I'll put a little hut on the west mountain slope," said the monk, "and grow some watermelons. You challenge him to battle and lure him into my melon patch, where you will change into a big, ripe melon. Then I'll give it to him. Once you are in his stomach, you can do what you like to him."

Monkey found the demon king, who, seeing Monkey was alone, said, "I will not use my treasure this time. I'll give you a straight fight and we'll see who wins." Retreating all through the battle, Monkey led the demon king down the mountain slope.

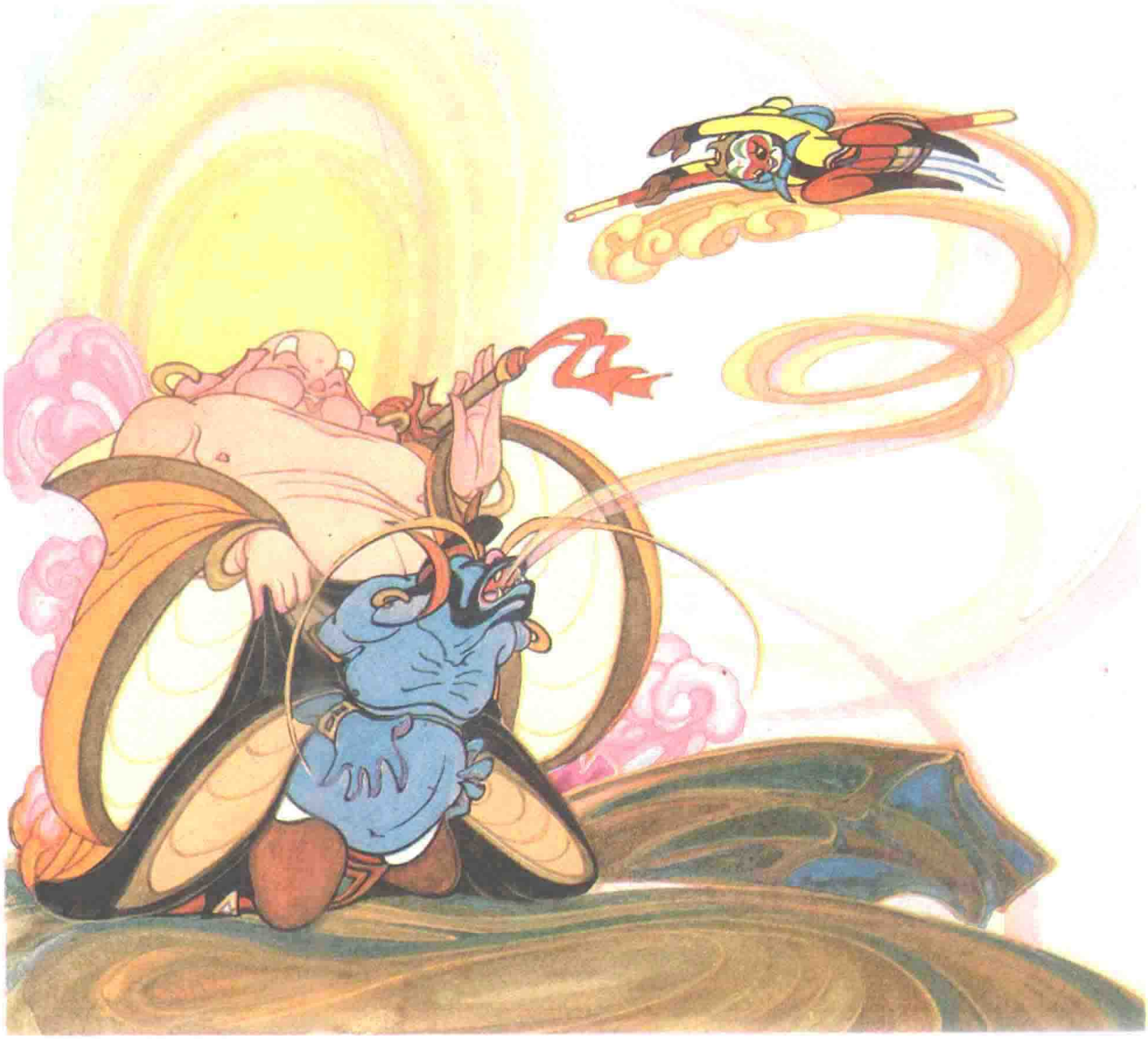


When he came to the melon patch, Monkey rolled and turned himself into a big, ripe melon. Unable to find Monkey, the demon rushed over to the hut and asked, "Who's growing these melons? Are there any ripe ones?" The Laughing Monk, who had turned himself into an old melon grower, answered, "I am the grower. There are some ripe ones."

With a smile, the monk picked the melon that was really Monkey and handed it to the demon king. "It has a nice smell," said the demon king after smelling the melon. As he bit into it, Monkey seized the chance to go straight down to the demon's stomach.

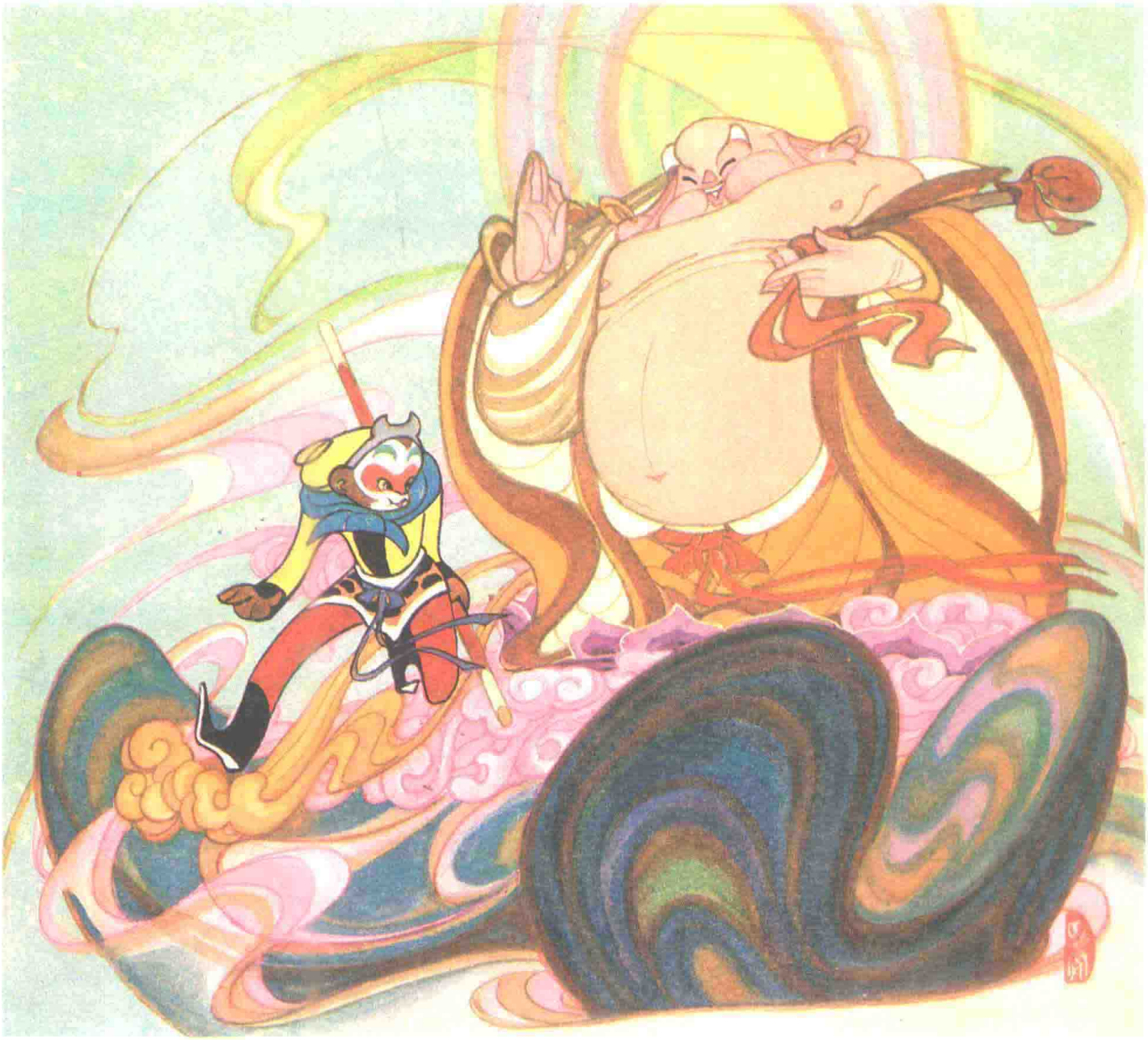
Monkey immediately started hitting, kicking, turning somersaults and standing on his head in the monster's stomach. The demon king felt such a terrible pain that he rolled around the melon field. The monk then turned back to his true form and demanded, "Evil beast, do you recognize me?"

The Laughing Monk stepped forward, untied the pouch and took the stick for beating the chime bronze. Seeing his master, the demon king fell to his knees and pleaded for his life.

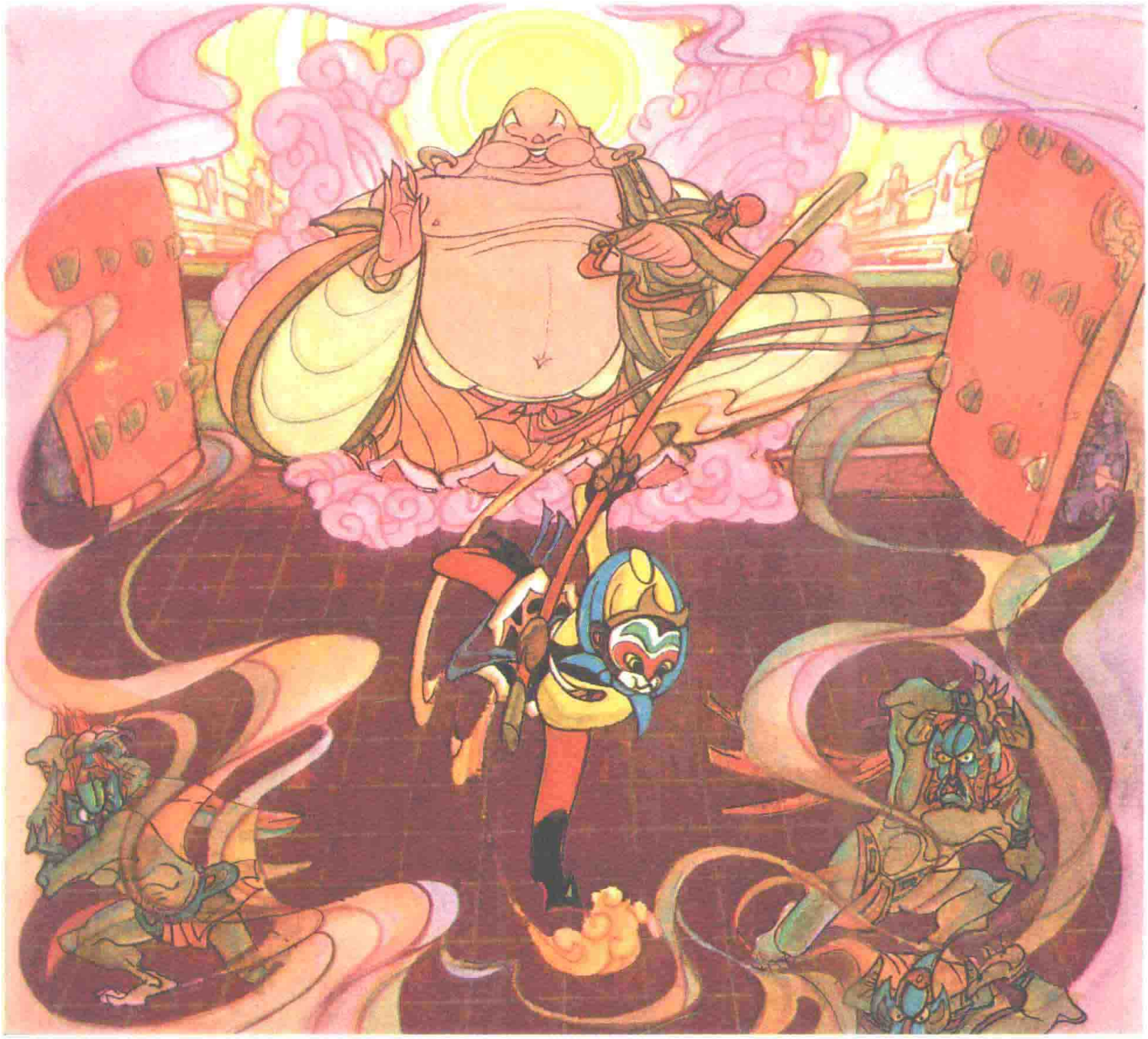


The Laughing Monk said, "Monkey, since he has already admitted his evils, spare his life for my sake. Come out, please." "Tell him to open his mouth," said Monkey. The demon king immediately opened his mouth wide and Monkey whizzed out.

Monkey at once seized his cudgel and was about to strike again, but the monk had put the old demon into the pouch. Then he asked the demon where the cymbals he had stolen were. "After Monkey has smashed them, the pieces were piled on the lotus throne in the main hall," replied the old demon.



Holding the bag in one hand and the stick in the other, the monk laughed and said, "Monkey, you and I are going to get my gold back." So Monkey led the Laughing Monk on an auspicious cloud and headed for Lesser Thunder Monastery.



When they entered the monastery gate, they saw that all the little devils had taken the monastery's wealth and were fleeing for their lives.

The Laughing Monk gathered all the pieces of gold together, blew on them with magic breath and recited a spell. At once they were the two golden cymbals again.

The Laughing Monk took his leave of Monkey and headed straight back to his paradise by an auspicious cloud.

Monkey rushed into the back hall and untied the Tang Priest, Pig and Friar Sand. After being hung up there for several days, Pig was desperately hungry. When he saw a saucepan of rice that the demon king had prepared, he ate half of it before fetching two bowlfuls for his master and Friar Sand.

Monkey opened up the pit and untied the prisoners. As they each took leave on a cloud to return to the palaces of heaven, the Tang Priest and his disciples bowed to each of them in thanks. Then master and disciples picked up their baggage and continued their journey to the West.

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